

Commissioner's Weekly Wrap Up

DCS Communications Office

December 3, 2004

The Week Ahead

Mon., Dec. 6 – The Commissioner attends a Governor's cabinet meeting. The Commissioner also attends a reception honoring Governor Bredesen.

Tue., Dec. 7 – The Commissioner attends a holiday party for regional administrators, CSA directors, support staff and others.

DCS Retirements

Several South Central Region employees are retiring from DCS. **Delores Love**, a secretary, retired on October 15, after 32 years of service. The *Columbia Daily Herald* newspaper ran an article about Love and her years of service in its November 28 edition. In the story, Love said she hopes to spend her retirement traveling and catching up on her reading and embroidery work. **Ann Simms**, a case manager 3, retired on October 29, after 25 years of service. And **Judith Woolley** will be retiring on December 5, after three years of service with the department and many years of work with CSA.

If you are retiring or know a DCS employee who has recently retired or will be retiring in the near future, please send such announcements to public information officer K. Danielle Edwards at K.Danielle.Edwards@state.tn.us.

We are also looking to include information on employees' professional accomplishments (honors, awards, etc.), as well as region-related news. Please send such information to the e-mail address indicated above.

Upper Cumberland DCS and CSA Walk with Tennessee's First Lady

Submitted by Sandy Sauceman, Director of Administration and Human Resources - UCCSA/Cookeville

First Lady Andrea Conte visited Cookeville on Wed., Nov. 17, to log more miles toward her goal of 600 miles in walking across Tennessee for child advocacy. Teams from the Upper Cumberland regional DCS and CSA offices participated, with the UCCSA having the second-largest team participating from the area. District Attorney General Bill Gibson's team won first place with the largest team.

As a fund-raiser for the event, Robert Ring, along with his CPS team and Theresa Looper, sponsored a soup luncheon at the DCS office, which featured homemade soups and sandwiches. Members of the Salem Road social committee furnished the desserts and drinks, and raised \$396.00 from the event, which Ring presented at the walk to Conte.



THE UCCSA team consisted of 10 members, including eight who finished the 12.4 miles. Shown here with Ms Conte are team members Martin Hale, Sandy Sauceman, Loni Holloway, John Rust, Bobbie Harris, Jerri Cross, Dale Pilson, Sue Pilson and Randi Moser.

DCS Employees Discuss Transportation Improvements

Submitted by Johnny Stewart, Deputy Administrator – Interstate Compact on Juveniles



On November 23, 21 DCS employees met at the Center for Adoption to discuss transportation-related issues and make recommendations for improvement. A staff member from each regional office region and youth development center attended the meeting. The meeting was productive, as many excellent recommendations were made. Commissioner Miller visited the meeting and thanked the group for all of their hard work and dedication. Employees present included Chris Angel, Larry Baker, Anita Crutcher, Jeff Hedgecoth, Yolando Jackson, Susan Jaquith, Harry Lane, Jacqueline Lee, Artra McNeil, Leon McNeal, Ricky Moreland, Roger Neely, Jeff Ottinger, Mickey Smith, Ronnie Stevenson, Johnny Stewart, Charlotte Stinnett, Dwight Walker, Sandra Watson, Carl Whitstine and Robert Wiley.

Chattanooga Couple Celebrates 45 Years of Fostering Children in Tennessee

*Submitted by K. Danielle Edwards, Public Information Officer
(Recommended by Jackie Thomas)*



Roger and Imogene Gorsuch closed their foster home approximately two to three weeks ago, after having served 233 foster children during their 45 years as foster parents in Tennessee. It was a difficult decision for the couple to make, as Mrs. Gorsuch said, the couple had not been without a child in the house since two years after they married. Both 86 years old, the couple

began considering their stage in life and their lifestyle needs, and decided to close their home.

“We’re getting older,” Mrs. Gorsuch said. “We used to have a houseful, and we started cutting back, because when you get older, you can only do so much. So we just had newborns the past few years. We didn’t have any problems, but we just felt it was time to quit. It was hard to get used to. This was our life for so long.”

Roger and Imogene Gorsuch have four biological children of their own, but decided to become foster parents out of an altruistic desire to help others, as well as a sort of personal ministry, because they feel they had been so fortunate in their own lives.

“The Lord had been so good to us – a nice home and four wonderful children – and we just wanted to help someone else. So that’s the route we’ve taken. We had some wonderful children, and we still have contact with some of them,” Mrs. Gorsuch said.

The couple keeps in touch with about 75 of their former foster children. Many of these people are now adults, some of whom have contacted Mr. and Mrs. Gorsuch up to three decades after being in their home. Many of the former foster children periodically visit, call and write the couple letters. And in their adult years, some former foster children have rekindled their link with the Gorsuches and welcomed them as part of their own extended families.

Carrying on the Mission of National Adoption Awareness Month

DCS is continuing its “Building Families – One Child at a Time” initiative through the end of the year. The effort unofficially kicked off in mid-October, but was launched in earnest in November to commemorate National Adoption Awareness Month. National Adoption Awareness Month is a time when a multitude of adoption-related issues are addressed and explored, but the month’s mission focuses on children in foster care who are up for adoption.

As part of “Building Families – One Child at a Time,” DCS regional offices set their own internal goals for adoption finalizations. To date, each region has completed the following number of adoptions, as of Fri., Dec. 3.

<u>Region</u>	<u>Goal</u>	<u>Completed Adoptions</u>
Shelby County	65	24
Southwest	25	3
Northwest	20	13
South Central	Goal Reached	
Mid-Cumberland	30	13
Davidson County	30	16
Upper Cumberland	40	24
Southeast	Projected to reach or exceed goal of 15 by Dec. 16	
Hamilton County	21	5-6
Knox County	30	17
East	50	36
Northeast	50	17

Performance Evaluations

Submitted by William Haynes, Executive Director – Human Resources Development

In 2005 and beyond, the Department of Children's Services will place renewed emphasis on the accomplishment of employee performance evaluations. For many employees and supervisors alike, the evaluation process has been viewed as a negative, unnecessary evil. Some see the process as a nuisance at best, a contentious intrusion at worst.

In actuality, the performance evaluation is an important tool with significant value to the agency and to each individual employee. When properly executed, the evaluation process is used to promote employee development, enhance employee productivity, serve as a basis for sound personnel decisions, and provide a permanent record of the performance of major job duties and responsibilities.

The performance evaluation system has two primary functions. One function is administrative. The performance evaluation provides a formal record of employee performance for a specific period of time. This record may provide support for performance-related administrative actions affecting the employee. Some of these actions include the award of performance bonus points for promotional purposes, layoff or reduction in force (RIF), promotion, demotion, transfer, termination and achievement of Civil Service status.

Satisfactory performance, as documented in an evaluation, could also be a factor in receiving salary increases or bonuses. Increases or bonuses are not automatic for all employees. Employees must have demonstrated satisfactory job performance for the rating period immediately preceding the increase or bonus.

Many employees question the continued need for evaluations because they no longer are tied to merit raises. The truth is, the evaluation process was not developed for the purpose of proving merit raises. Even when there were funds available, relatively few employees ever received a merit raise.

The second function of the performance evaluation system is developmental in nature. Employee performance should be enhanced by the identification and communication of relevant job responsibilities and performance standards. Further, this provides the supervisor with an objective basis to give appropriate performance feedback and coaching. The incorporation of supportive individual performance goals maximizes the achievement of organizational goals and objectives. Effective utilization of the performance evaluation system benefits both the individual employee and the department. The employee is given a clear understanding of job requirements, as well as opportunities for growth, development and promotion. The department benefits from enhanced employee job performance and satisfaction, and the development of a mature, low maintenance workforce.

A key component in the performance evaluation process is the development of the job performance plan (JPP). Supervisors must develop the JPP within 30 days of an employee's regular appointment, promotion, change of supervisors or formal evaluations. Job duties listed on the JPP should have specific job behaviors with measurable outcomes. The JPP is not based on personal characteristics such as initiative, attitude or motivation.

Employee also must receive at least one documented interim review during each probationary or annual evaluation period. There is nothing to limit the supervisor to one review. Reviews should be conducted as frequently as necessary to address deficient job performance. An interim review must be completed at least 90 days prior to the probationary or annual evaluation due date in order to allow the employee sufficient time to correct deficiencies.

In 2005, all supervisors and managers will be expected to adhere to the employee evaluation process and to submit all evaluations in a timely manner. At any given time, approximately 300 evaluations are overdue in the department. Many employees are not evaluated for years at a time. Often when evaluations are accomplished, they are done without a job performance plan and/or proper interim reviews, which render the evaluation invalid.

Many supervisors routinely give employees ratings of '4' or '5' without regard to an actual job performance. Certainly, the employee that is performing at a high level should be recognized as such. However, a '4' is to be given when the work of the employee is considered superior, while a '5' is reserved for work characterized as exceptional. Superior is defined as above the average in excellence, of higher grade or quality. Exceptional is defined as unusually excellent, extraordinary. Based on those definitions merely doing what is expected does not merit a '4' or '5' rating.

During the first six months of 2005, DCS personnel staff will conduct performance evaluation training sessions in all regions, with all departmental supervisory staff. A variety of topics will be covered, including the development of the JPP and how to conduct interim reviews. The purpose of the training and the emphasis on performance evaluations is to ensure that DCS employees perform at the highest level possible so that children and families receive the best outcomes possible.

The greatest asset the Department of Children's Services has is our employees. Not performing evaluations in an appropriate manner devalues this asset.

Core Leadership

CORE Leadership Meeting Beth Kasch, Presiding November 23, 2004

Special Recognition:

John Sparks recognized Mohamed Ismail El-Kaissy and Carolyn Craft for their hard work in saving the department money on TennCare deficit. DCS is now at \$95,000.

TAC:

Bonnie Hommrich is developing the agenda for the TAC-plaintiff meeting on Nov. 29 from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Tentative Agenda:

9:30-10:30 a.m. - Update on Path to Excellence - Commissioner Miller

10:30-11:30 a.m. - Quality Assurance – Daryl Chansuthus and Petrina Jones-Jesz
11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. - Training – Donna Johnson and Stacey Borasky
12:30-1:30 p.m. - Psychotropic Medication – Audrey Corder, Tricia Henwood, and Chris Bellonci
1:30-2:30 p.m. – Needs Assessment (including waivers)
Elizabeth Black and Judy Cole will attend all day.

Adoption Retreat:

Elizabeth Black provided a handout on streamlining the Adoption Process in Tennessee. She discussed the development of the Cross Functional Teams for Adoption. Judy will train all regions. Black stated self-reporting documents from the regions and private providers on adoptions would be eliminated. Petrina Jones-Jesz will be producing monthly aggregated data cases. There will be further discussion on using Chapin Hall data sets for producing core outcomes on a Quarterly basis. Dual approval of all resource parents is expected to be completed by February 2005. Training for providers is a must. A needs assessment is to be completed and sent to the TACC and providers.

Randal Lea will collect information from 3 or 4 leveling and rate structures from other states for Core Leadership to review. The Commissioner wants to develop appropriate dialogue to discuss adoption inventiveness.

Elizabeth Black discussed a plan of integrating the CFTM/TDM in the Selection Committee process.

Review of Appeals:

Mary Beth Franklyn provided a handout and discussed the First Quarter '04 Appeals Directives. The Commissioner recommended a quarterly meeting of RAs and TennCare representatives at the RA meetings.

The Commissioner wants to spend the next year developing the clinical decision-making. The Board of Directors from Centerstone wanted to hear from DCS regarding unmet needs of this department on key concerns, such as access to BHOs and contract issues. Franklyn will get input from the field regarding unmet needs and services. The Commissioner stated that we need data to support our decisions.

Serious Incident Reports:

There were 18,000 SIRs so far this year by contract agencies. Audrey Corder presented a draft flowchart of SIR system. This proposed committee would include a contract monitor, IS, provider, Debra Valentine (OIG), SIU, Randal Lea and Tricia Henwood. Two persons from the seven-member committee would be required to agree upon appropriate disciplinary action. The goals of the SIR process included data Collection, information for child's record and immediate action on SIRs. Regional CQI Teams will have SIRs on their agenda and need both individual and aggregate data.

IS Announcement:

Michael Price stated there would be two server outages that will take place on the first and second weekend of December.

CQI Process:

Daryl Chansuthus gave handouts that reflected changes in the CQI Manual. Bonnie Hommrich will pilot the CQI Cross Functional Team Meetings once a month during the P&P meetings. Every member of Central Office needs to be on a CQI team.



Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved.

-Helen Keller

What success I achieved in the theater is due to the fact that I have always worked just as hard when there were ten people in the house as when there were thousands. Just as hard in Springfield, Illinois as on Broadway.

-Bill "Bojangles" Robinson